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Mahabharata - 29

KRISHNA'S PEACE MISSION

O MONARCH, HAVING TAKEN LEAVE OF YUDHISHTHIRA, KRISHNA SET OFF ON HIS PEACE MISSION FOR HASTINAPURA.

"AND STRANGE OMENS WERE SEEN ON THE OCCASION. THOUGH THERE WERE NO CLOUDS, THERE WERE THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.

"THE SKY WAS CLEAR AND YET THERE WAS TORRENTIAL RAIN.

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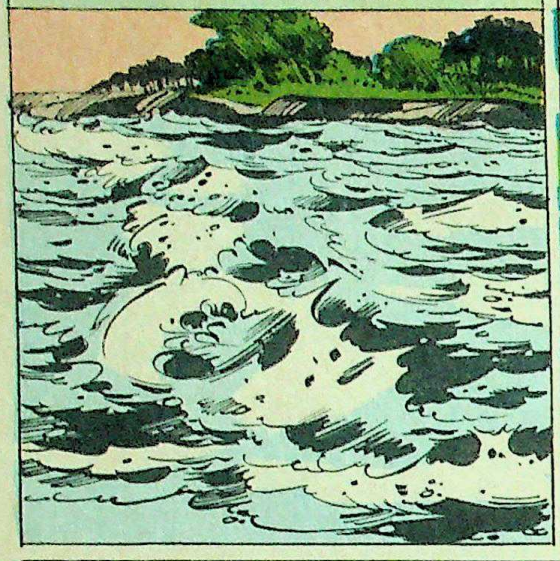
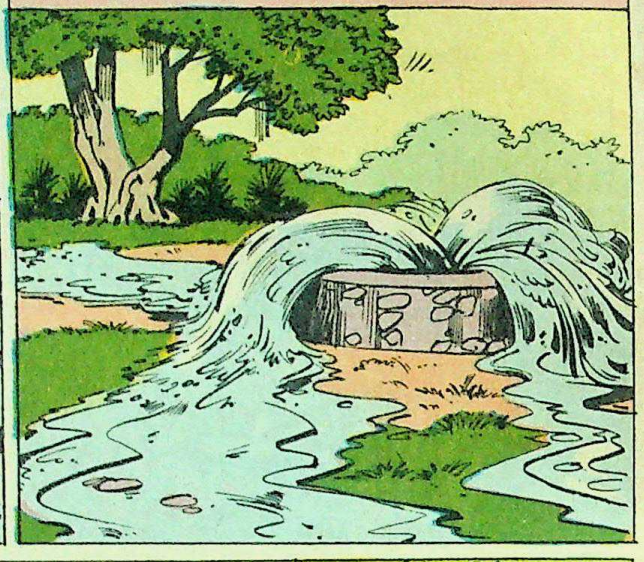
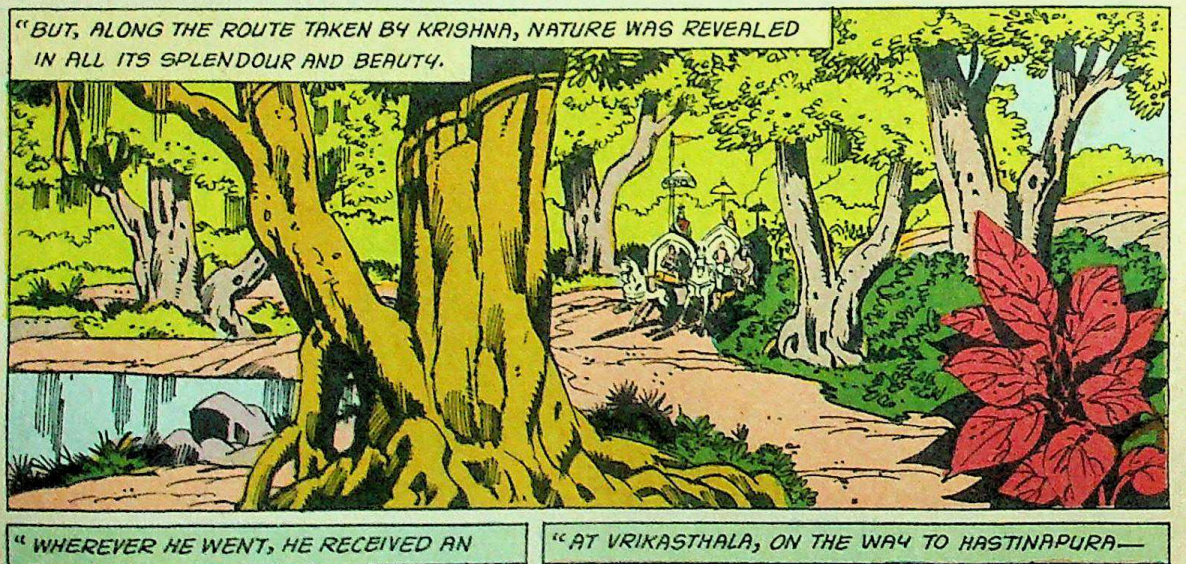
"THE RIVERS FLOWED UPSTREAM.



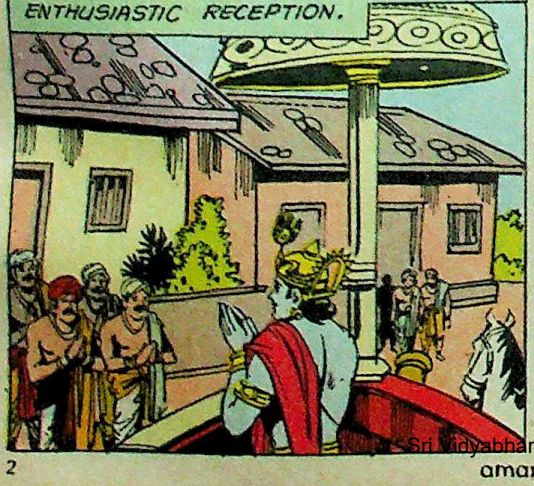
"THE WELLS SPEWED OUT THEIR CONTENTS.



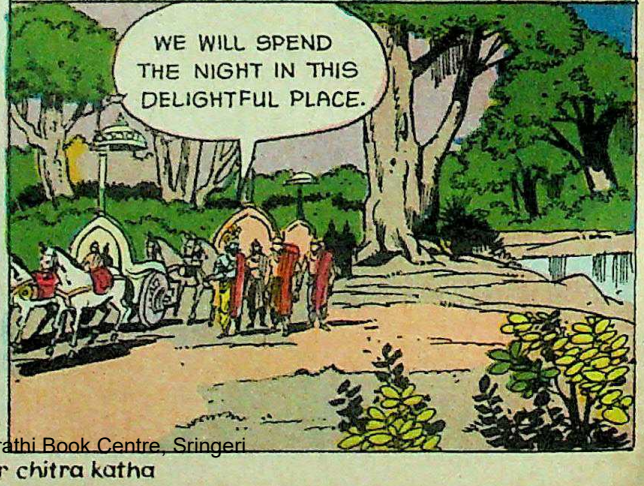
"BUT, ALONG THE ROUTE TAKEN BY KRISHNA, NATURE WAS REVEALED IN ALL ITS SPLENDOUR AND BEAUTY.



"WHEREVER HE WENT, HE RECEIVED AN ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION.



"AT VRIKASTHALA, ON THE WAY TO HASTINAPURA—



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"MEANWHILE, AT HASTINAPURA, A SPY PRESENTED HIMSELF BEFORE KING DHRITARASHTRA.

O GREAT KING, KRISHNA IS ON HIS WAY HERE.

"DHRITARASHTRA IMMEDIATELY CALLED VIDURA.

O VIDURA, WE MUST SPARE NO EFFORT IN GIVING A BIG WELCOME TO KRISHNA. HE IS THE FOREMOST AMONG MEN AND WORTHY OF WORSHIP.

HAVE A GRAND MANSION BUILT ON HIS WAY HERE. I WILL HONOUR HIM WITH SIXTEEN GOLDEN CHARIOTS, EIGHT ELEPHANTS AND MANY OTHER PRECIOUS GIFTS. I WILL PERSONALLY GO WITH ALL MY SONS AND GRANDSONS TO WELCOME HIM. DURYODHANA WILL NOT COME WITH ME.

"HEARING THIS, VIDURA SAID —

O KING, NO DOUBT KRISHNA DESERVES ALL THIS. INDEED HE DESERVES THE WHOLE EARTH. BUT I KNOW YOUR MIND. YOU DO NOT REALLY WISH TO HONOUR HIM. THE TRUTH IS THAT YOU THINK YOU COULD BRIBE KRISHNA WITH YOUR GIFTS AND DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN HIM AND THE PANDAVAS.

THAT, O KING, WILL NEVER BE POSSIBLE. KRISHNA WILL NEVER ACCEPT ANY OF YOUR GIFTS. IF YOU REALLY WISH TO MAKE HIM HAPPY, AGREE TO WHAT HE IS COMING HERE FOR — A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT BETWEEN YOUR SONS AND THE PANDAVAS.

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"DURYODHANA SAID—

O KING, I TOO THINK YOU WILL NOT SUCCEED IN ALIENATING KRISHNA FROM THE PANDAVAS. DO NOT GO TOO FAR TO PLEASE HIM. HE MAY THINK WE ARE AFRAID OF HIM.

"BHEESHMA INTERPOSED—

WE MUST PAY HEED TO WHAT KRISHNA SAYS AND ACCEPT HIS ADVICE WITHOUT QUESTION. HE IS VIRTUOUS AS WELL AS INTRANSIGENT.

"BUT DURYODHANA PERSISTED.

O GRANDSIRE, THERE IS NOT THE LEAST LIKELIHOOD OF MY SHARING THE KINGDOM WITH THE PANDAVAS. LISTEN, EVERYBODY, TO MY PLAN. I WANT TO IMPRISON KRISHNA ON WHOM THE PANDAVAS RELY SO MUCH. WITHOUT HIM, THE PANDAVAS AND THEIR ALLIES WILL BE EASILY OVERCOME BY US. DO SUGGEST HOW TO GO ABOUT MY PLAN.

"DHRITARASHTRA WAS SHOCKED—

O DURYODHANA! NEVER SAY SUCH A THING AGAIN! KRISHNA COMES TO US AS AN AMBASSADOR AND SHOULD BE TREATED AS SUCH!

"BHEESHMA SAID—

O KING, DURYODHANA'S HOUR HAS COME. DISREGARDING THE ADVICE OF HIS WELL-WISHERS HE CHOOSES THE PATH OF DESTRUCTION. I DO NOT WISH TO HEAR ANY MORE OF HIS RAVINGS.

"AND A FURIOUS BHEESHMA STALKED OUT OF THE COURT.

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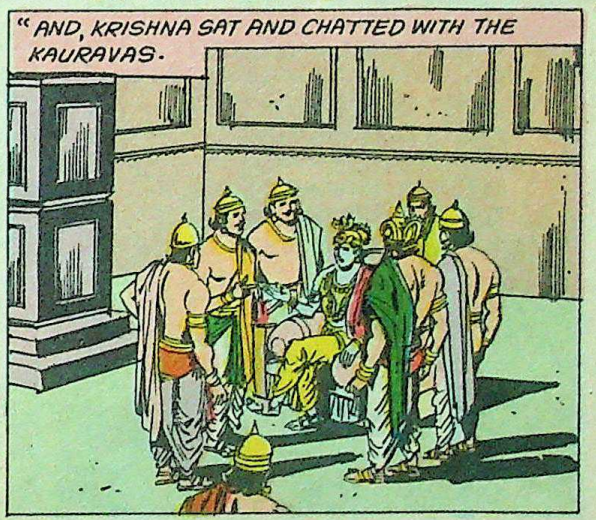

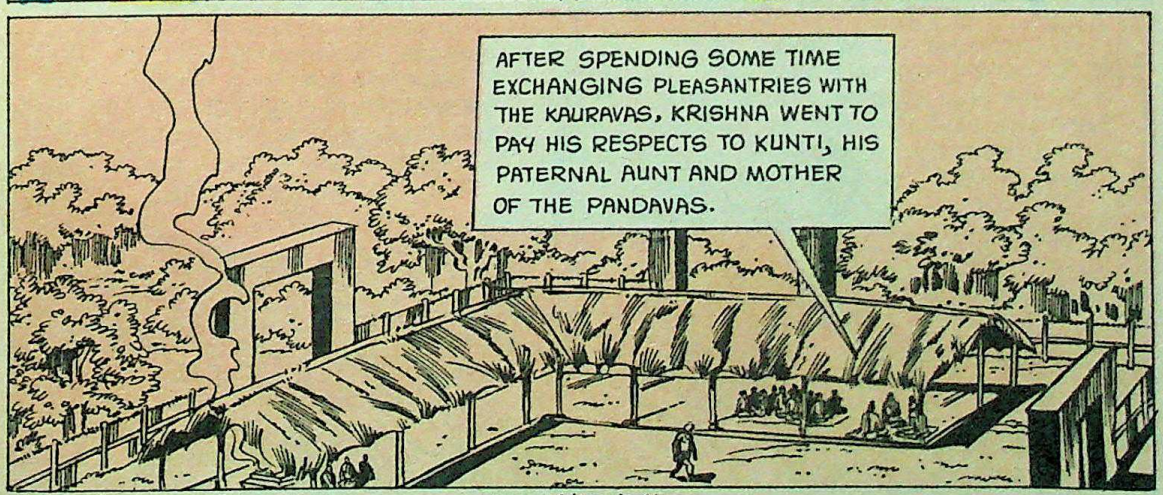

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"HER VOICE CHOKED WITH GRIEF, KUNTI SAID TO KRISHNA—

HOW ARE MY SONS? THEY WERE USED TO A LIFE OF COMFORT IN PALATIAL MANSIONS. HOW ARE THEY FARING IN THE FORESTS INFESTED WITH SAVAGE BEASTS?

HOW IS MY VIRTUOUS YUDHISHTHIRA AND HOW IS MY POWERFUL BHEEMA WHO IS EASILY AROUSED TO ANGER? HOW IS MY ARJUNA, THAT DEARLY LOVED COUSIN AND FRIEND OF YOURS? ARE THE TWINS IN GOOD HEALTH? AND MY DEAREST DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, THE BEAUTIFUL PANCHALI, IS SHE WELL?

HOW SHE HAS SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF THE VILE KAURAVAS! O KRISHNA, NEVER IN MY LIFE HAVE I FELT AS GRIEVED AS WHEN I SAW DRAUPADI BEING DRAGGED INTO THE KAURAVA ASSEMBLY AND DISGRACED IN FRONT OF EVERYBODY.

WIDOWHOOD, POVERTY, DEPENDENCE ON CHARITY AND PROLONGED SEPARATION FROM MY SONS HAVE CAUSED ME GREAT SUFFERING.

I WAS DISTRESSED AT MY NOBLE SONS BEING DRIVEN INTO THE FOREST. AND NOW THEY HAVE EVEN BEEN DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIVELIHOOD. WE DESERVE HAPPINESS, O KRISHNA, AFTER LONG YEARS OF AGONY.

O KRISHNA, TELL MY SONS THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THEM TO SHOW THEMSELVES AS TRUE KSHATRIYAS. TELL THEM THAT IF THEY DO NOT UPHOLD THEIR DHARMA NOW, I SHALL FORSAKE THEM FOR EVER.

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"KRISHNA ROSE—

O DURYODHANA, ONE ACCEPTS AN INVITATION TO A MEAL EITHER OUT OF FRIENDSHIP AND GOODWILL OR OUT OF DIRE NEED. YOU HAVE NEVER BY ANY ACT OF YOURS INSPIRED FRIENDSHIP IN ME. NOR AM I IN EXTREME NEED. YOUR FOOD IS DEFILED BY YOUR WICKEDNESS.

LATER THAT DAY, HE WENT TO VIDURA'S PLACE AND TOOK HIS FOOD THERE.

LATER—

I DO NOT BELIEVE YOU HAVE DONE THE RIGHT THING IN COMING HERE. DURYODHANA AND HIS FRIENDS ARE EVIL. HE WILL DISREGARD YOUR COUNSEL. DO NOT GO IN THEIR MIDST, O KRISHNA.

I KNOW THAT, VIDURA. I WILL STRIVE WITH IMPARTIALITY FOR THE WELFARE OF BOTH SIDES. EVEN IF DURYODHANA MISTRUSTS ME, I WILL HAVE THE SATISFACTION OF HAVING DONE MY DUTY.

I DO NOT WISH TO BE ACCUSED OF NOT HAVING ATTEMPTED TO STOP A POSSIBLE WAR.

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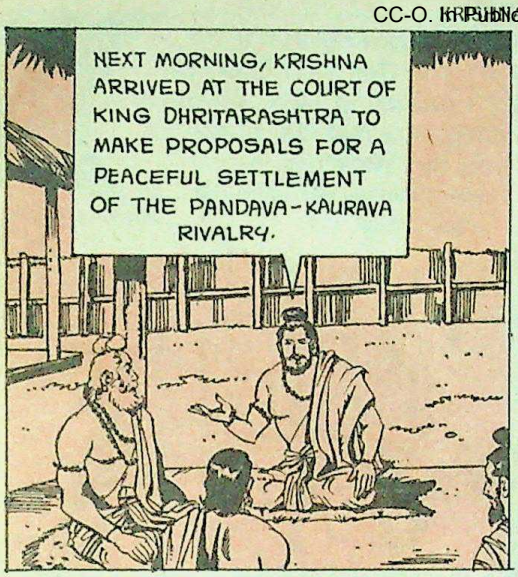

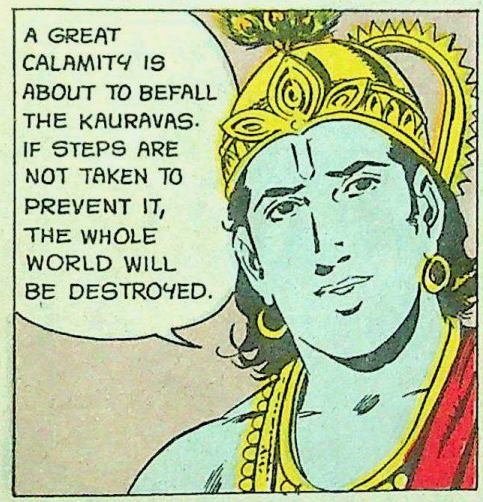

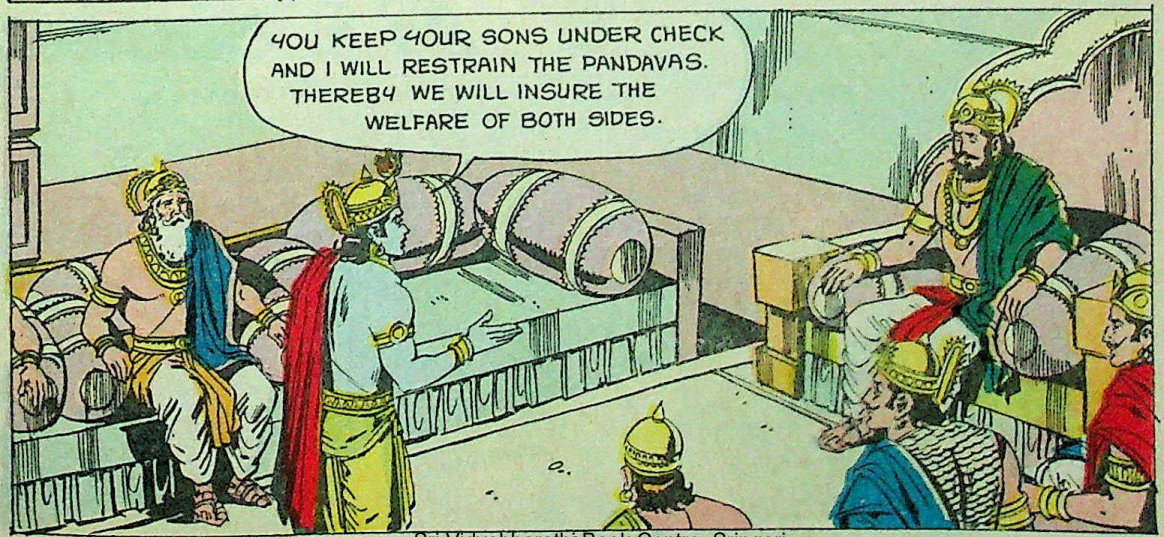

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O KING, PEACE WITH THE PANDAVAS WILL BE OF BENEFIT TO YOU. IF YOU RESTORE THEIR KINGDOM TO THEM AND HONOUR THEM AS BEFORE, YOU WILL CONTINUE TO RULE THE EARTH UNDER THEIR PROTECTION.

THEY ARE EVER RESPECTFUL TO YOU. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE BEEN UNJUST TO THEM, THEY SEEK YOUR PROTECTION AND ARE READY TO SERVE YOU. BUT THEY WILL FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS. SO DO WHAT YOU DEEM FIT.

"THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY LISTENED TO KRISHNA'S PROPOSAL IN RESPECTFUL SILENCE.

"DHRITARASHTRA THEN SAID—

O KRISHNA, THERE IS TRUTH AND WISDOM IN YOUR WORDS. BUT, ALAS, I AM UNABLE TO CHECK MY SON. IT IS FOR YOU NOW TO BRING HIM ON TO THE RIGHT PATH.

"KRISHNA SAID—

O DURYODHANA, LISTEN TO ME, FOR I SPEAK FOR THE GOOD OF YOU AND YOUR KIN.

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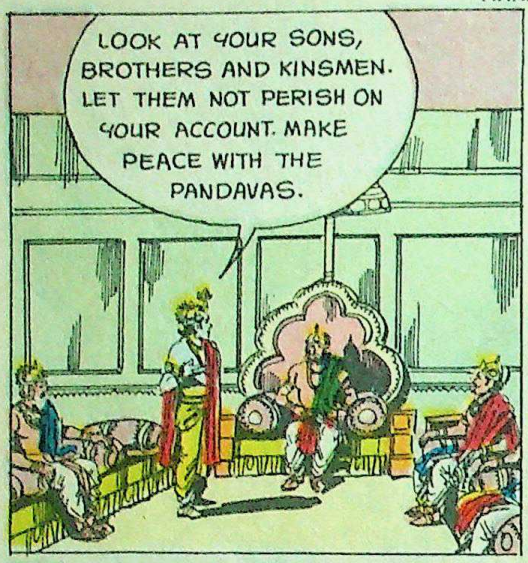

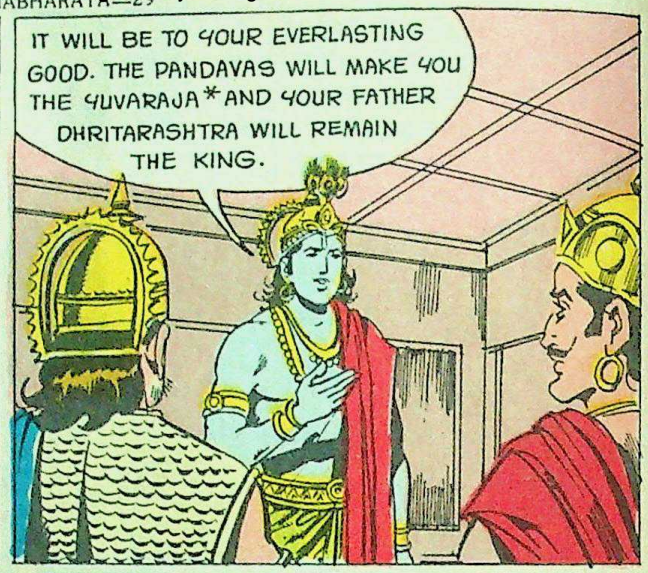

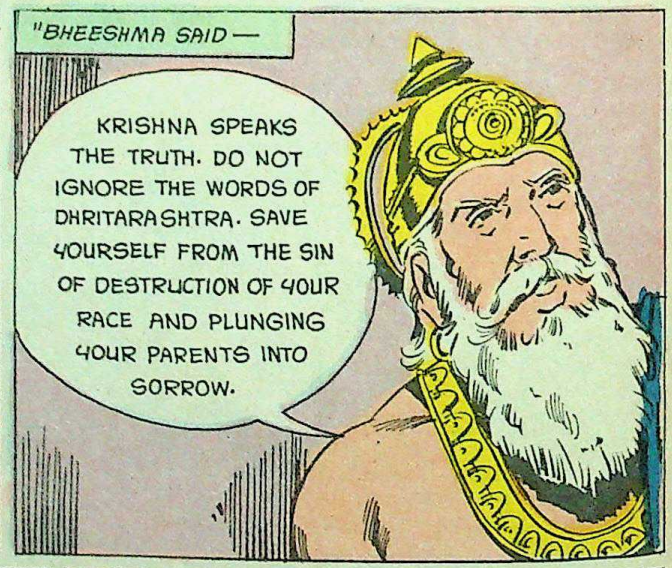

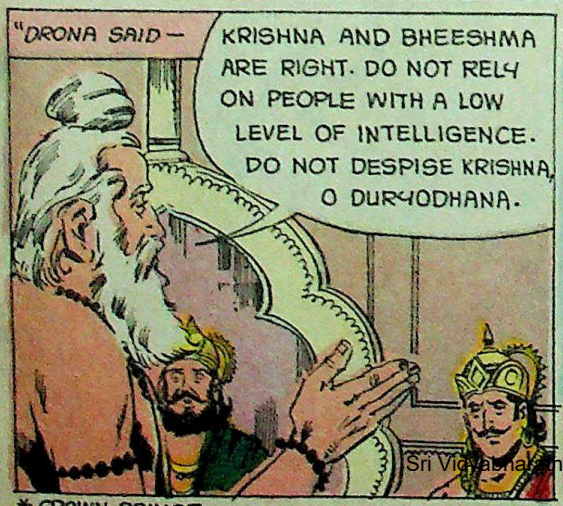

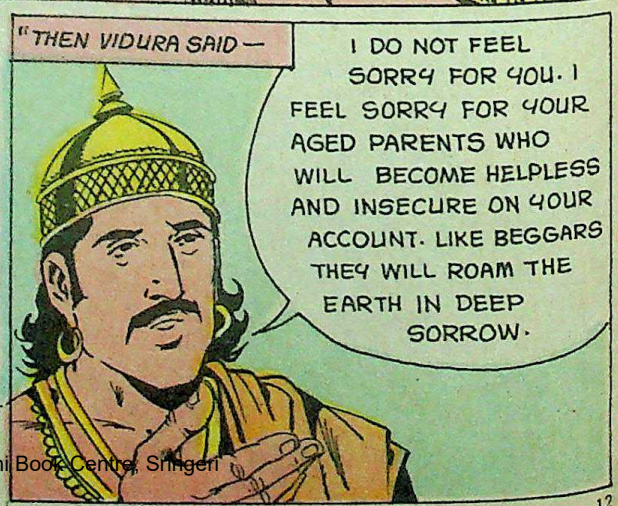

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* CROWN PRINCE.

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"HEARING ALL THIS, DURYODHANA SAID TO KRISHNA.

HOW UNJUST THAT EACH OF YOU SHOULD FIND FAULT WITH ME ALONE! THERE IS NOTHING REPREHENSIBLE IN MY BEHAVIOUR.

I DID NOT FORCE YUDHISHTHIRA TO PLAY DICE. THE PROPERTY THEY LOST BY PLAYING THE GAME WAS RETURNED TO THEM. IF THEY LOST AGAIN, HOW AM I TO BLAME? WHY DO THEY WISH TO KILL US?

THE KINGDOM BEQUEATHED TO ME BY MY FATHER WILL NEVER BE GIVEN AWAY SO LONG AS I AM ALIVE. WHILE KING DHRITARASHTRA IS ALIVE, WE AND THE PANDAVAS SHOULD LIVE PEACEFULLY, WITHOUT RESORTING TO AN ARMED CONFLICT.

OUT OF FEAR AND IGNORANCE, I GAVE TO THE PANDAVAS WHAT WAS NEVER THEIRS. BUT NOW I WILL NOT GIVE THEM EVEN THAT MUCH LAND AS CAN BE PIERCED BY THE POINT OF A NEEDLE.

"KRISHNA REPLIED, HIS EYES FLASHING WITH ANGER—

DURYODHANA, THE TRUTH IS THAT YOU GOT SHAKUNI TO PLAY A DECEITFUL GAME. AND YOU HAVE ALWAYS PLAYED FOUL WITH THE PANDAVAS.

YOU WISH FOR THE DEATH OF HEROES? THEN YOU SHALL HAVE IT. SOON THERE WILL BE A FEARFUL SLAUGHTER OF THE KAURAVAS AT THE HANDS OF THE PANDAVAS.

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"DUHSHASANA SAID—

O DURYODHANA, I SUSPECT THAT IF YOU DO NOT GIVE IN TO KRISHNA'S PROPOSAL, THEN YOU, KARNA AND I WILL BE BOUND HAND AND FOOT AND TURNED OVER TO THE PANDAVAS.

"DURYODHANA ROSE, SPEECHLESS WITH RAGE...

"... AND WITHOUT A WORD, HE STALKED OUT OF THE COURT, FOLLOWED BY ALL HIS BROTHERS AND COUNSELLORS.

"THEN KRISHNA SAID—

LISTEN TO ME, O VENERABLE MEN OF THE KURU RACE. FOR THE GREATER GOOD OF ALL, EACH MUST LEARN TO SACRIFICE A LITTLE OF HIS OWN. ARREST DURYODHANA, MAKE PEACE WITH THE PANDAVAS AND SAVE THE KSHATRIYAS FROM DESTRUCTION.

DHRITARASHTRA SAID—

VIDURA, PLEASE BRING GANDHARI HERE. PERHAPS SHE WILL BE ABLE TO PERSUADE MY SON TO FOLLOW THE RIGHT PATH.

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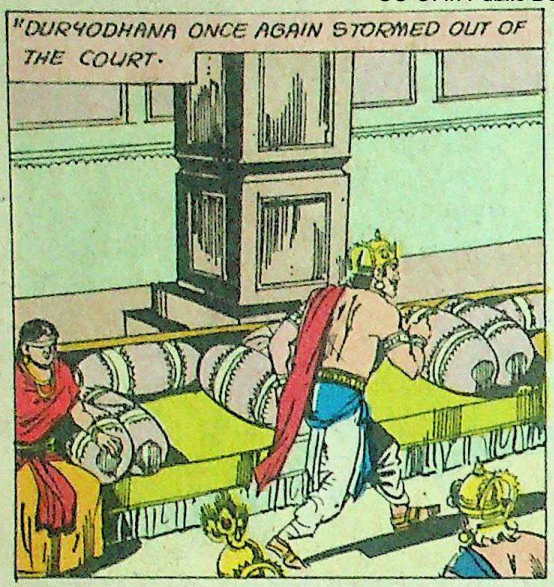

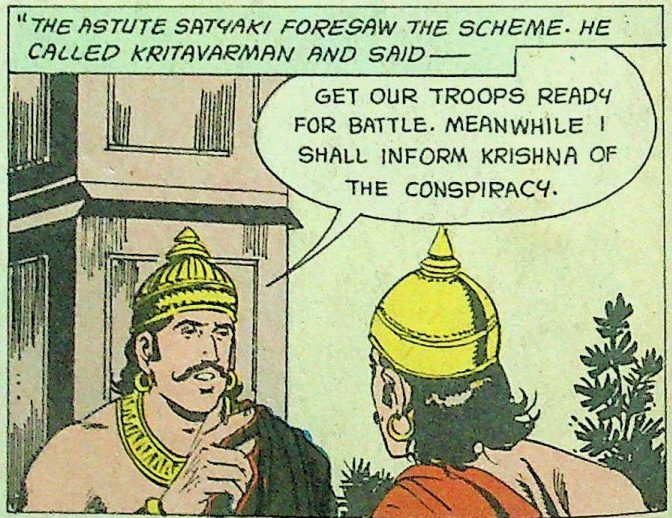

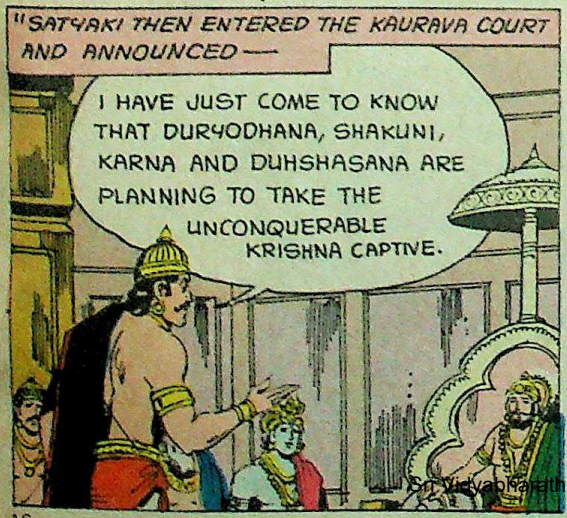

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KNOW, O KING, THAT I CAN IF I WISH HAND OVER THIS KINGDOM TO YUDHISHTHIRA HERE AND NOW. HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE ME TO SEIZE YOUR SONS AND TURN THEM OVER TO YUDHISHTHIRA.

"DURYODHANA WAS BROUGHT BACK TO COURT. KRISHNA ADDRESSED HIM.

O DURYODHANA, YOU ARE MISTAKEN IF YOU BELIEVE THAT I AM ALONE AND WITHOUT POWER. LOOK AT ME.

"AND KRISHNA REVEALED HIMSELF IN HIS CELESTIAL FORM BEFORE AN AWE-STRUCK COURT.

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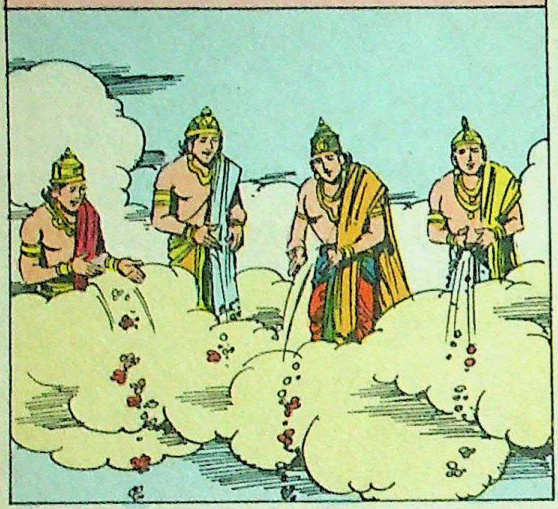
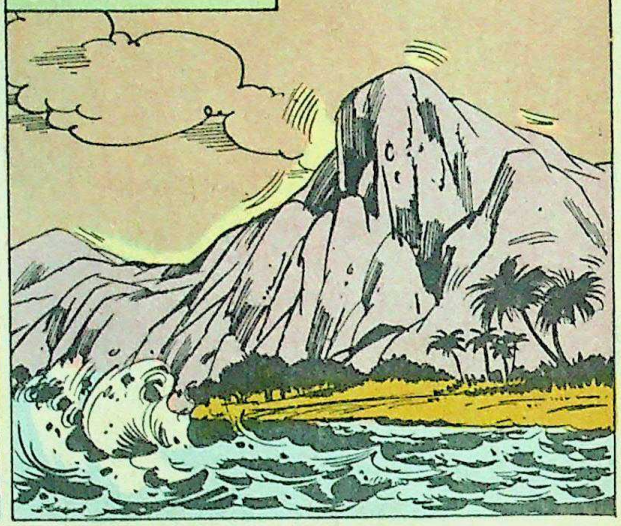
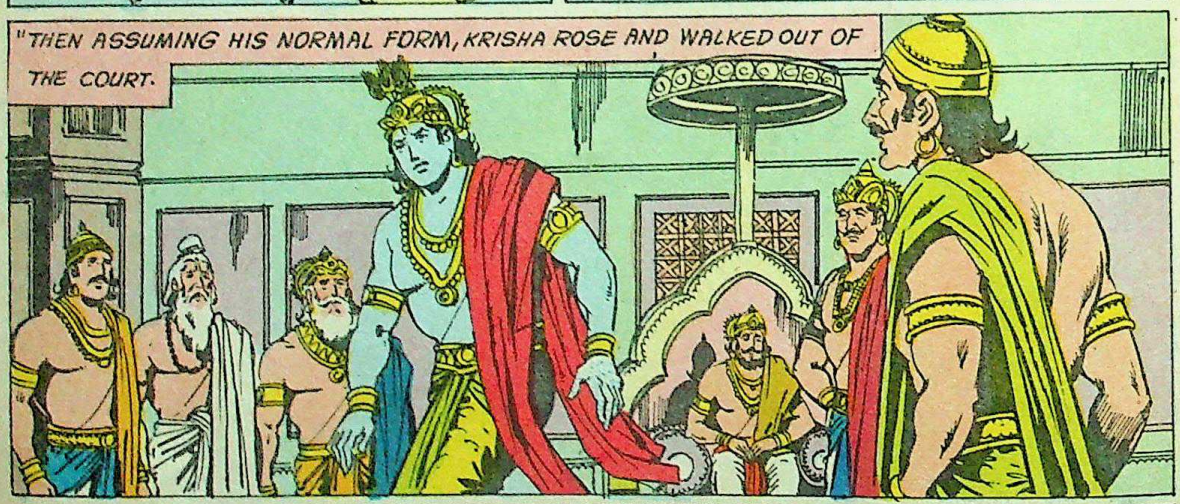
"SEEING THE DIVINE FORM, THE GODS SHOWERED FLOWERS FROM ABOVE.



"THE WHOLE EARTH TREMBLED AND THE OCEANS BECAME AGITATED.

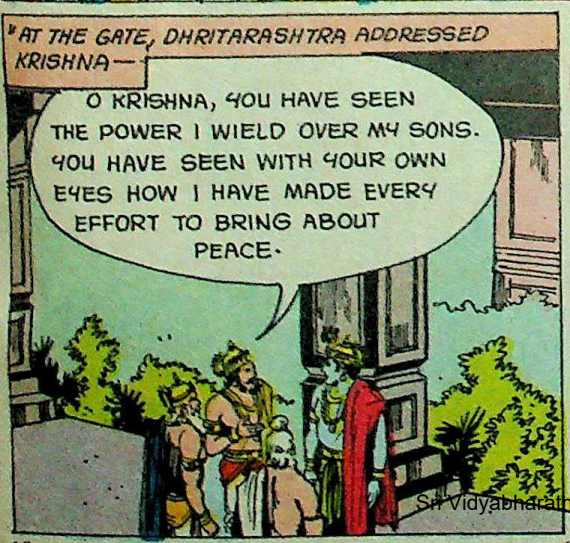


"THEN ASSUMING HIS NORMAL FORM, KRISHA ROSE AND WALKED OUT OF THE COURT.



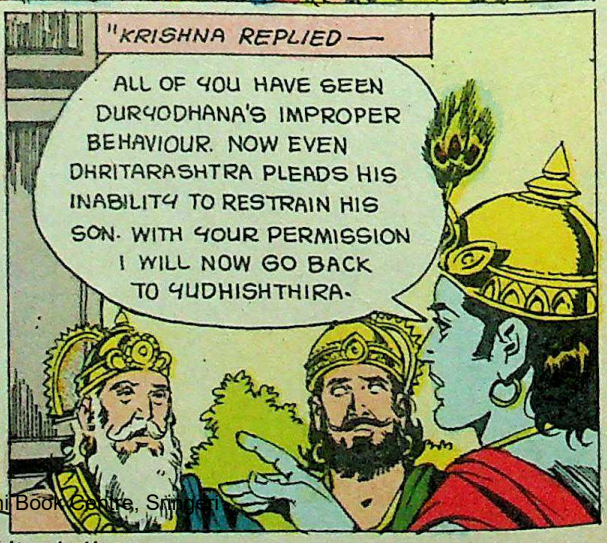
"AT THE GATE, DHRITARASHTRA ADDRESSED KRISHNA—

O KRISHNA, YOU HAVE SEEN THE POWER I WIELD OVER MY SONS. YOU HAVE SEEN WITH YOUR OWN EYES HOW I HAVE MADE EVERY EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT PEACE.



"KRISHNA REPLIED—

ALL OF YOU HAVE SEEN DURYODHANA'S IMPROPER BEHAVIOUR. NOW EVEN DHRITARASHTRA PLEADS HIS INABILITY TO RESTRAIN HIS SON. WITH YOUR PERMISSION I WILL NOW GO BACK TO YUDHISHTHIRA.



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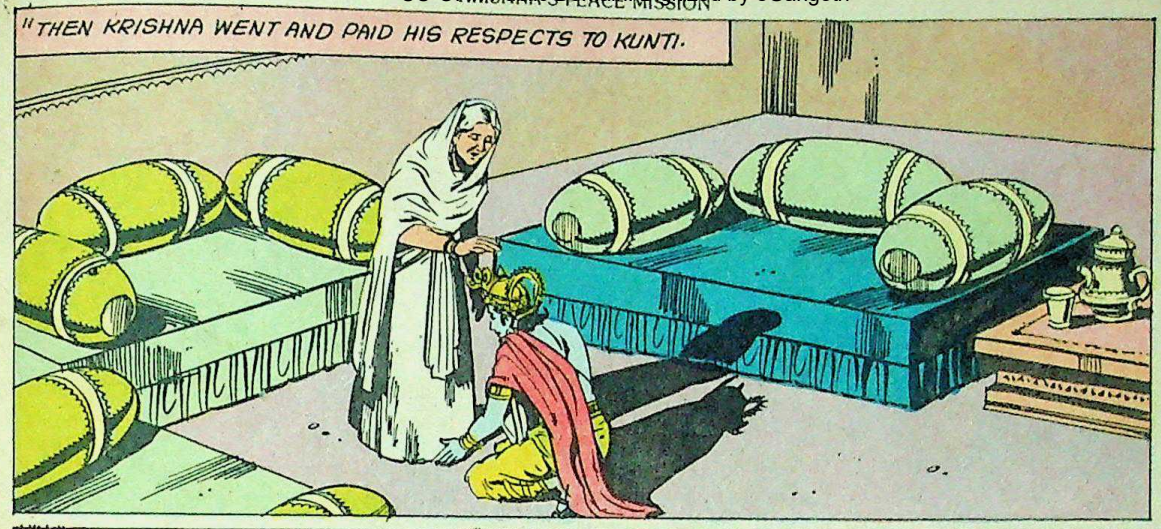

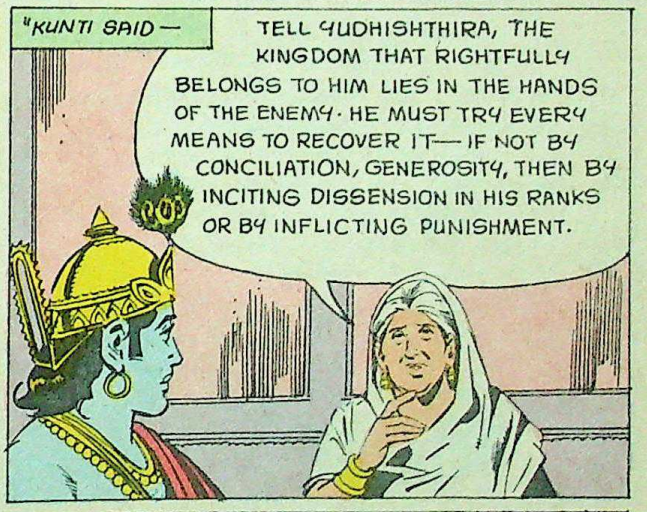

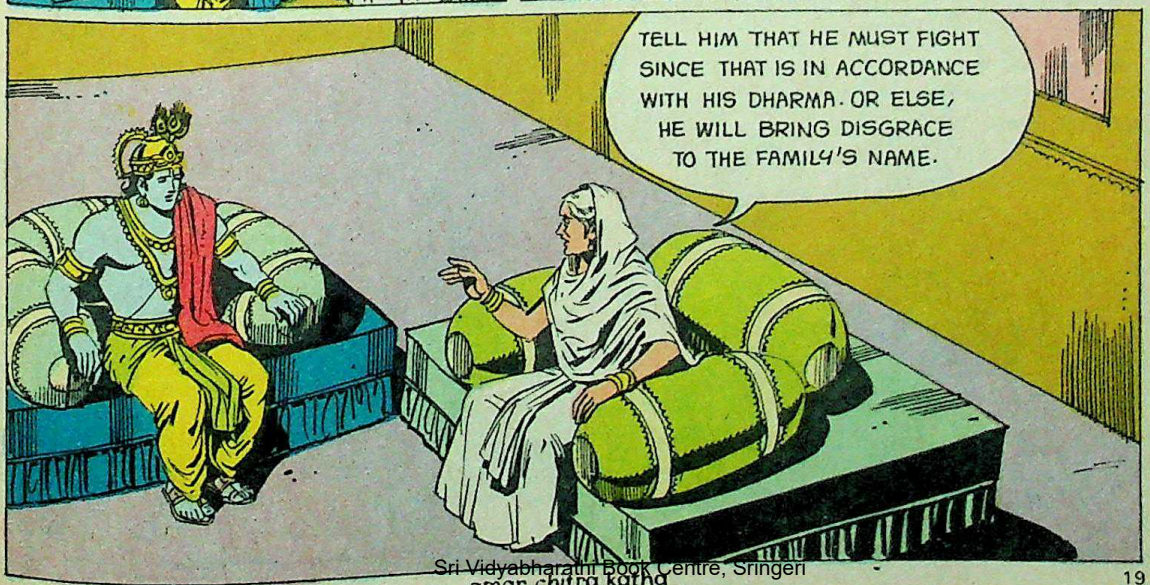

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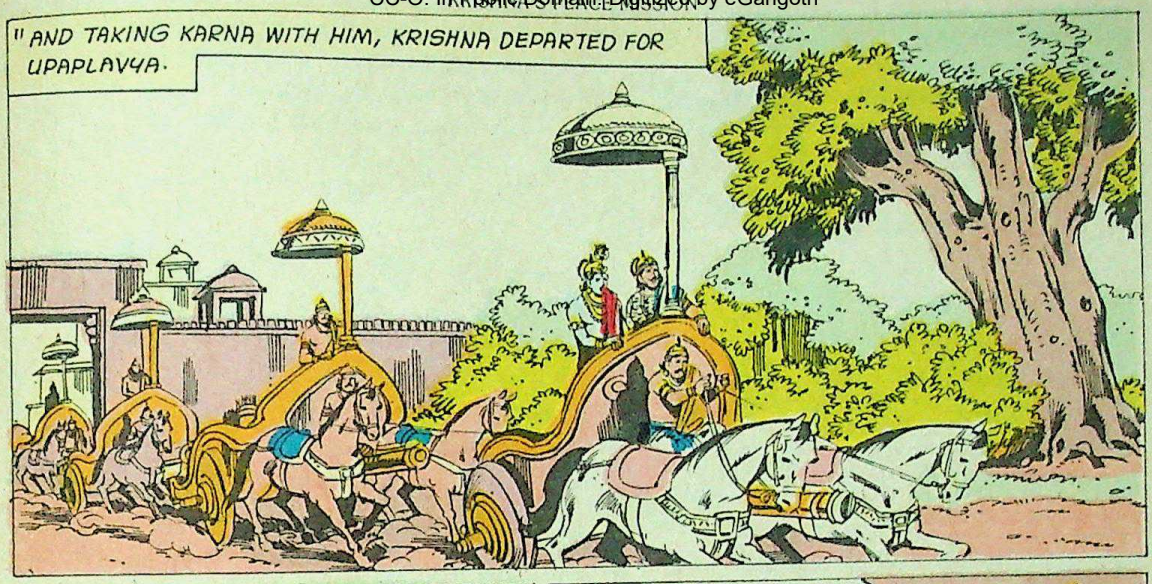

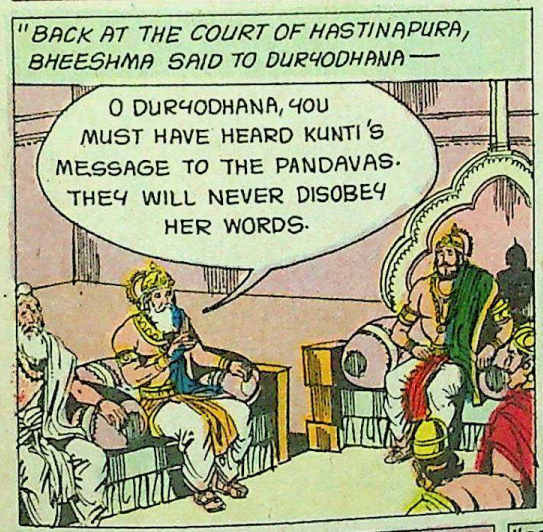

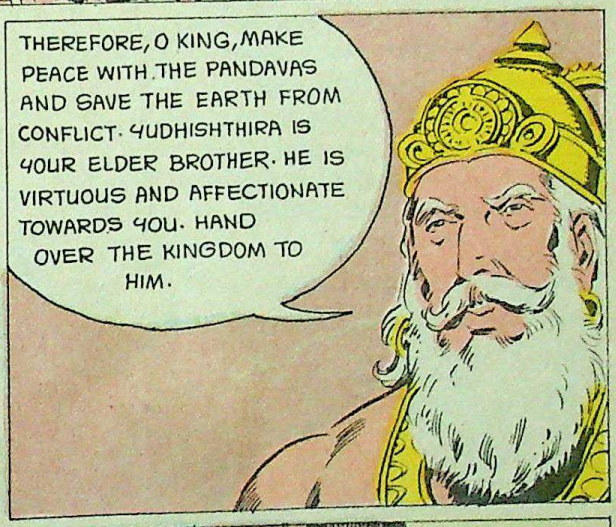

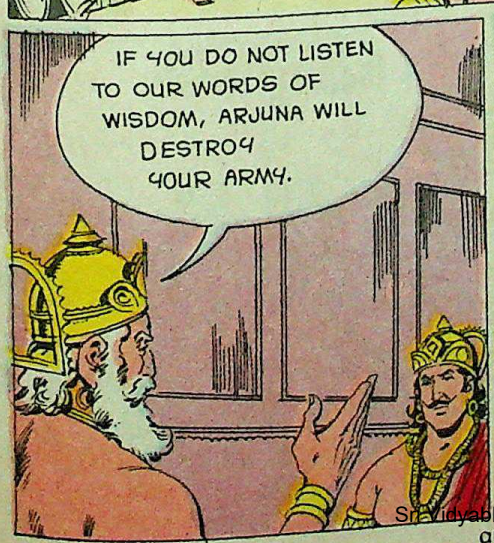

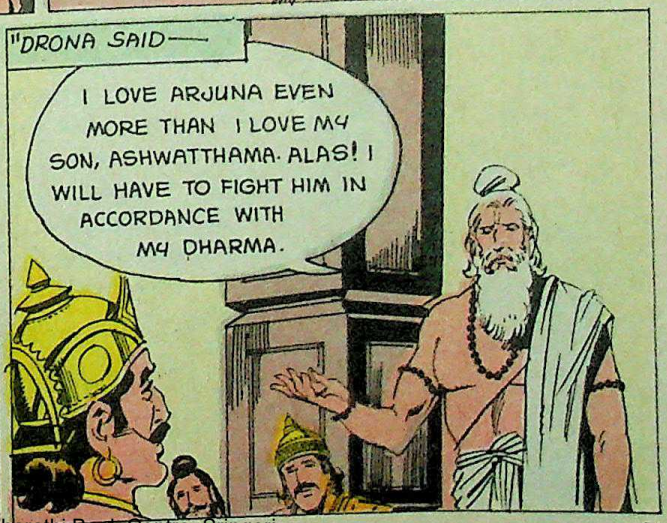

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"KRISHNA CONTINUED—

PROCEEDING THIS VERY DAY WITH ME, LET US GO AND BREAK THE GOOD NEWS TO THE PANDAVAS. THEY WILL WILLINGLY ACCEPT YOU AS THEIR KING AND RULER.

WITH THE POWERFUL PANDAVAS AND MY VRISHNI PEOPLE FOR YOUR ALLIES, YOUR FAME WILL SPREAD FAR AND WIDE AND GLADDEN THE HEART OF YOUR MOTHER, KUNTI.

"SAID KARNA—

O KRISHNA, WHAT YOU JUST SAID WAS KNOWN TO ME. I AM MORALLY THE SON OF PANDU. KUNTI, WHILE STILL A MAIDEN, BORE ME BY THE GRACE OF SURYA, THE SUN GOD.

HAVING THUS BORNE ME, SHE ABANDONED ME WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT MY WELFARE. THE CHARIOTEER ADHIRATHA TOOK ME HOME AND HE AND HIS WIFE RADHA CARED FOR ME AS IF I WERE THEIR OWN SON.

MY FOSTER-PARENTS CARRIED OUT ALL THE RITES CONNECTED WITH MY INFANCY, CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES. THE BONDS OF AFFECTION BETWEEN THEM AND ME ARE TOO STRONG TO BE BROKEN.

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KRISHNA'S PEACE MISSION
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"KRISHNA SAID—

O KARNA, YOU DO NOT WISH TO RULE THE EARTH WITH THE PANDAVAS AND MYSELF AS YOUR ALLIES. GO THEN BACK TO THE KAURAVAS AND TELL THEM THAT THE PRESENT MONTH IS AUSPICIOUS FOR BATTLE.

SUPPLIES ARE IN PLENTY AND THE WEATHER IS DELIGHTFUL. SEVEN DAYS FROM NOW IS THE NEW-MOON DAY. LET THE BATTLE COMMENCE THEN. THIS BATTLE WILL BE PRESIDED OVER BY INDRA HIMSELF.

"KARNA SAID—

O KRISHNA, YOU KNOW THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE. YOU KNOW THAT ALL KAURAVAS AND MYSELF ARE DESTINED TO BE DESTROYED.

IF WE COME OUT OF THIS GREAT BATTLE ALIVE, THEN WE SHALL MEET AGAIN HERE ON EARTH. OTHERWISE, CERTAINLY, WE SHALL MEET IN HEAVEN.

" KARNA THEN EMBRACED KRISHNA FONDLY...

"...AND LEFT FOR HASTINAPURA.

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amar chitra katha

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"KUNTI SAID —

YOU ARE MY SON. I BORE YOU WHEN I WAS YET A MAIDEN BY THE GRACE OF THE DIVINE AND BLAZING SURYA.

"JUST THEN, SURYA'S VOICE RANG OUT FROM THE HEAVENS.

O KARNA, KUNTI IS RIGHT. SHE IS YOUR MOTHER. FOLLOW HER WORDS AND BE WITH VIRTUE.

"KUNTI CONTINUED —

O KARNA, BEING MY SON, IT IS NOT PROPER FOR YOU TO SERVE DURYODHANA.

JOIN HANDS WITH ARJUNA. YOU WILL MAKE AN INVINCIBLE PAIR, CAPABLE OF ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING ON EARTH. SHED THE ROLE OF CHARIOTEER'S SON AND JOIN THE PANDAVAS AS A KING.

"KARNA SAID —

O MOTHER, I WAS ABANDONED BY YOU AS I WAS BORN. I HAVE BEEN DEPRIVED OF THE LIFE OF A KSHATRIYA. AFTER CASTING ME AWAY, HOW CAN YOU COMMAND ME THUS?

YOU HAVE NEVER BEFORE SOUGHT MY GOOD. AND EVEN TODAY, IT IS NOT MY GOOD YOU SEEK, BUT YOUR OWN. HOW CAN I JOIN THE CAMP OF THE PANDAVAS? WILL I NOT BE ACCUSED OF DOING SO OUT OF FRIGHT?

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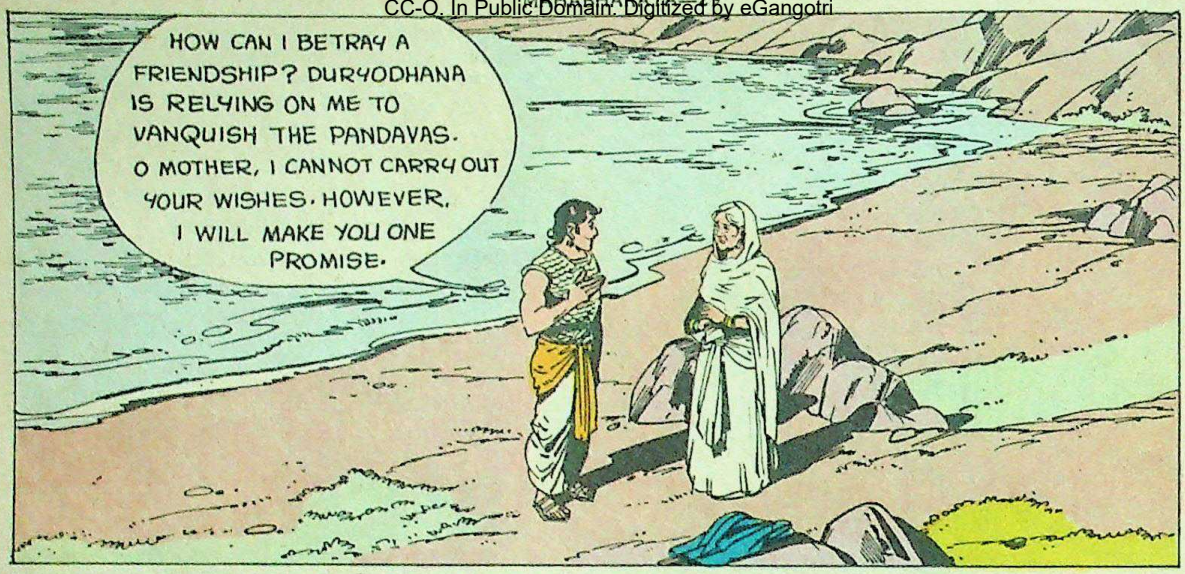

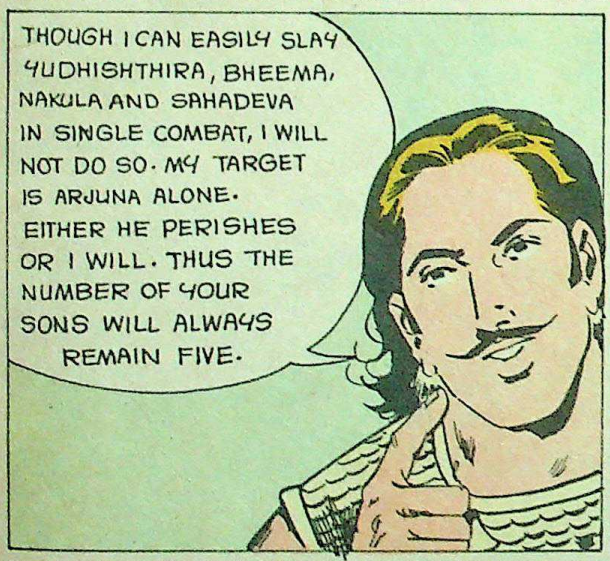

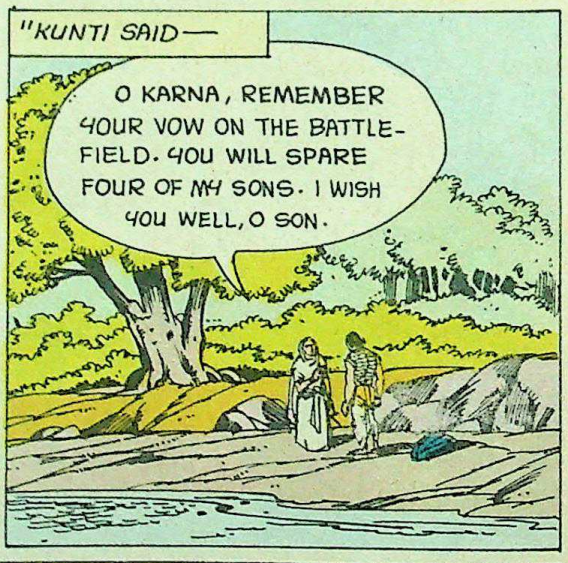

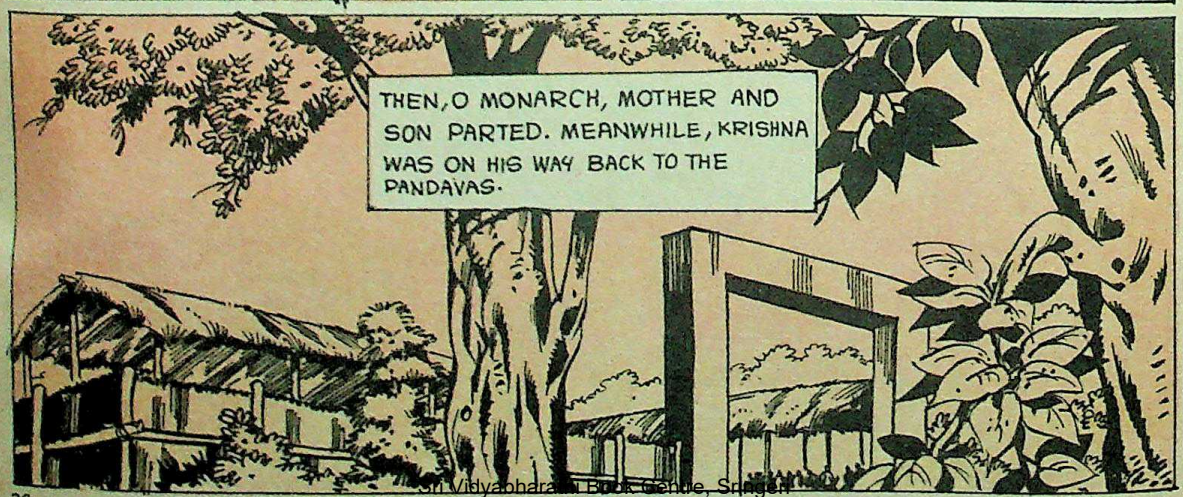

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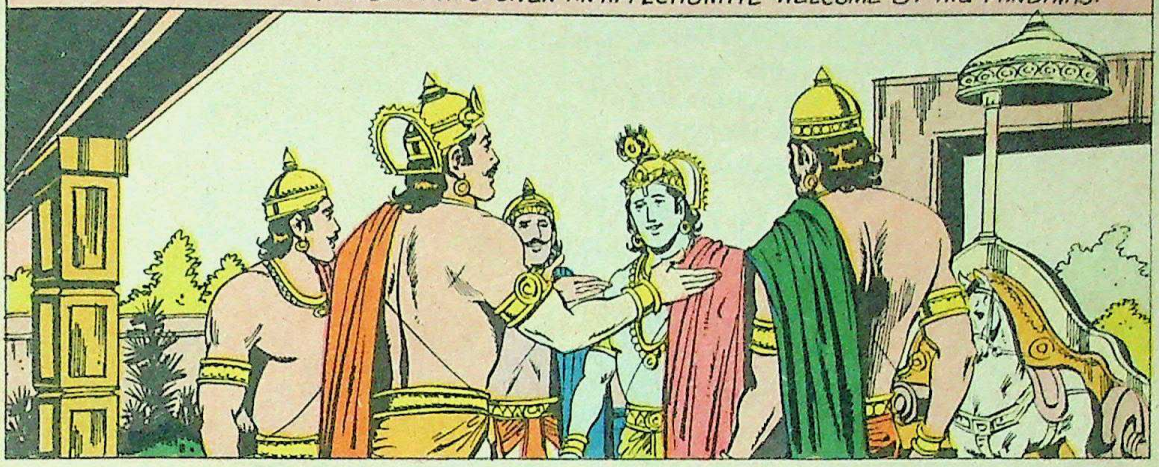
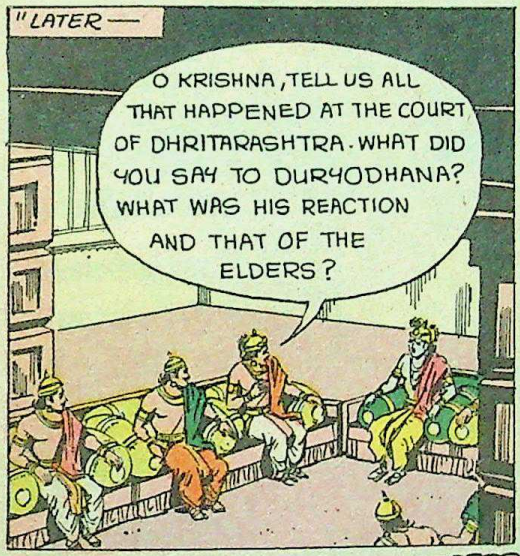
"ARRIVING AT UPAPLAVYA, KRISHNA WAS GIVEN AN AFFECTIONATE WELCOME BY THE PANDAVAS.



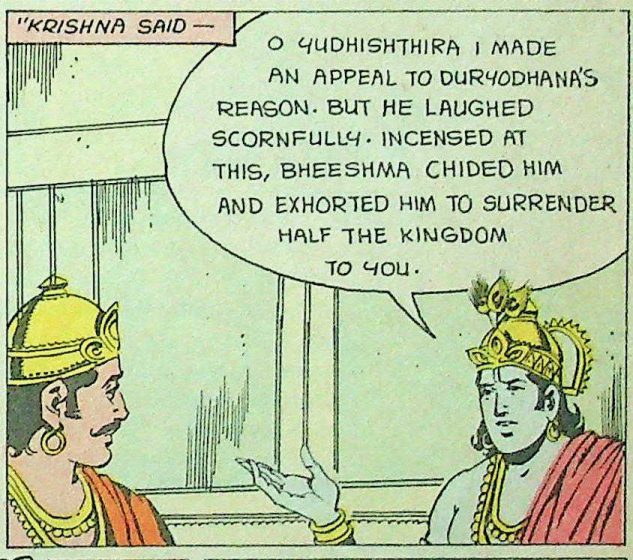
"LATER —

O KRISHNA, TELL US ALL THAT HAPPENED AT THE COURT OF DHRITARASHTRA. WHAT DID YOU SAY TO DURYODHANA? WHAT WAS HIS REACTION AND THAT OF THE ELDERS?



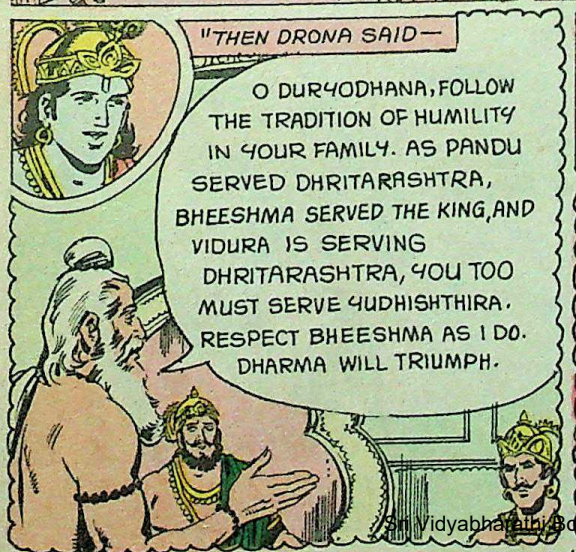
"KRISHNA SAID —

O YUDHISHTHIRA I MADE AN APPEAL TO DURYODHANA'S REASON. BUT HE LAUGHED SCORNFULLY. INCENSED AT THIS, BHEESHMA CHIDED HIM AND EXHORTED HIM TO SURRENDER HALF THE KINGDOM TO YOU.

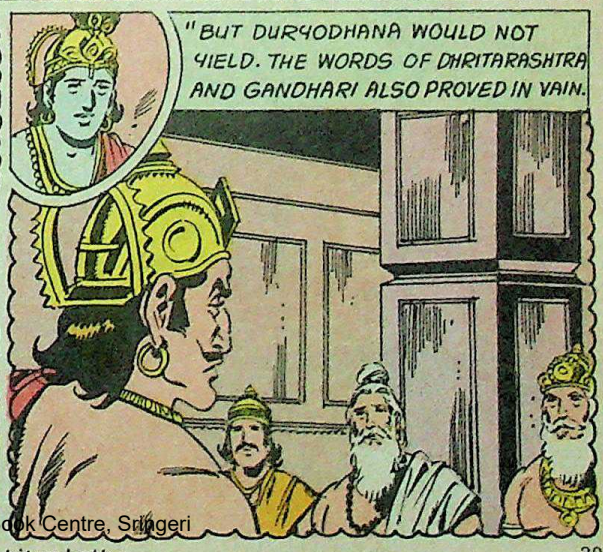


"THEN DRONA SAID —

O DURYODHANA, FOLLOW THE TRADITION OF HUMILITY IN YOUR FAMILY. AS PANDU SERVED DHRITARASHTRA, BHEESHMA SERVED THE KING, AND VIDURA IS SERVING DHRITARASHTRA, YOU TOO MUST SERVE YUDHISHTHIRA. RESPECT BHEESHMA AS I DO. DHARMA WILL TRIUMPH.



"BUT DURYODHANA WOULD NOT YIELD. THE WORDS OF DHRITARASHTRA AND GANDHARI ALSO PROVED IN VAIN.



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"DURYODHANA SAID TO HIS SUPPORTERS—

GET READY FOR WAR. MARCH THIS VERY DAY TO KURUKSHETRA.

" THEN THE TROOPS MARCHED OUT WITH BHEESHMA AT THEIR HEAD.

THIS, THEN, IS WHAT HAPPENED AT THE COURT OF HASTINAPURA. I HAVE DONE ALL I COULD TO AVERT A WAR. I TRIED TO INSTIL TERROR INTO THE HEART OF DURYODHANA BY ASSUMING MY COSMIC FORM, I CAJOLED HIM, I REBUKED HIM, BUT TO NO AVAIL. THE KAURAVAS ARE PREPARING FOR WAR.

AND THUS ENDS THE TWENTY-NINTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, MAHABHARATA.

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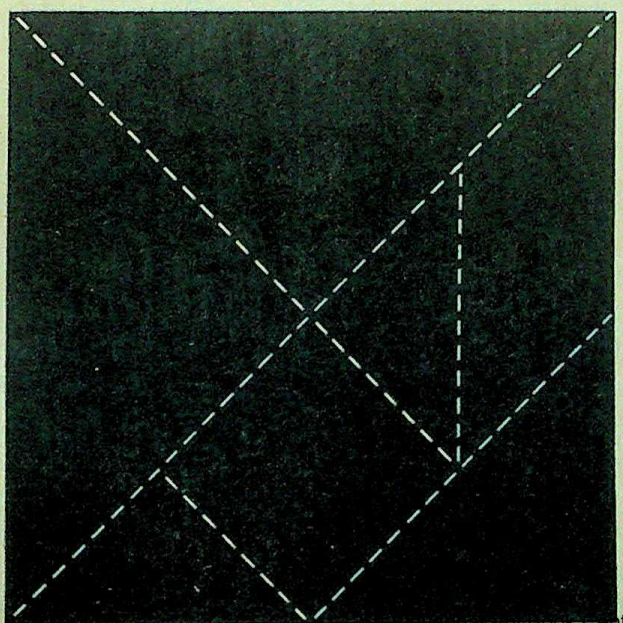

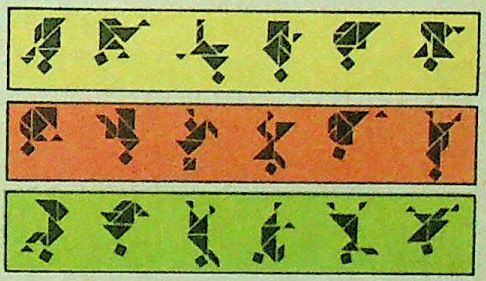

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